

VZCZCXRO1139
PP RUEHBC RUEHDE RUEHIHL RUEHKUK
DE RUEHGB #0565/01 0491136
ZNY SSSSS ZZH
P 181136Z FEB 07
FM AMEMBASSY BAGHDAD
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 9705
INFO RUCNRAQ/IRAQ COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
RHEHAAA/WHITE HOUSE WASHINGTON DC//NSC// PRIORITY
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY

S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 02 BAGHDAD 000565

SIPDIS

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 02/17/2017

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [SA](#) [IZ](#)

SUBJECT: TALABANI DISCUSSES LATEST ON MODERATE FRONT, PM
MEETING

Classified By: Ambassador Zalmay Khalilzad for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (C) SUMMARY: Iraqi President Jalal Talabani discussed the latest efforts on a moderate front in a February 11 meeting with the Ambassador, Deputy Prime Minister Barham Salih and Minister of Water Latif Rashid. He gave the Ambassador a readout of his meeting with Iraqi Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki, and discussed the draft De-Ba'athification law and the removal of CoR Speaker Mahmoud Mashhadani. Rashid discussed Iranian support for clearing the Shatt al-Arab waterway and the visit of a Palestinian delegation. They also briefly discussed negotiations on the draft Hydrocarbons law and the PKK. END SUMMARY.

Moderate Front

¶2. (C) Talabani said the the moderate front concept paper Prime Minister Barham Salih gave him was good but the PM may not accept it as written. Salih suggested first giving it to Hashemi and Mehdi. Talabani said it would be acceptable as the basis of a discussion. He said he would call a meeting of the moderate front (including Hashemi, Mehdi, and the PM, but excluding the CoR Speaker) for February 13, once Vice-President Abdel Mehdi had returned from An Najaf, followed by a PCNS meeting later. Talabani and Salih thought they could have significant progress on the moderate front by February 17.

¶3. (S) Asked if a proposed meeting between the Presidency Council and the PM would discuss the program of a moderate front, Talabani said first he would consult SCIRI and UIA leader Abdelaziz al-Hakim. HE said he asked the PM to call for the meeting and said the PM supports the moderate front.

¶4. (S) Asked if former Deputy Prime Minister and KDP member Rowsch Shaways should be included in moderate front meetings, Talabani said yes, he is KRG President Barzani's representative, and he has already participated in another meeting at Hakim's. However, he would have no role in the Presidency Council meeting with the PM, Talabani said.

Talabani's Meeting with Maliki

¶5. (S) Talabani said he had talked to the PM earlier that day who had "opened his heart," and expressed sharp feelings about the Sadrists. The PM told him "you are like my father" and asked for advice on dealing with the Sadrists. Salih claimed that this was the first time he has seen Maliki really tough on the Sadrists, and called it a "good moment to push" the PM.

¶6. (S) Talabani told the Ambassador that the PM understands

the need to explain to the Arab world that they are not pro-Iranian. Talabani said the PM had sent a delegation to Saudi Arabia to explain this. He said the PM wanted to change some of the poor-performing Iraqi Ambassadors such as the one to Egypt and asked for Talabani's support to engage SCIRI and Foreign Minister Zebari on this issue.

¶7. (S) Maliki claimed that there was a conspiracy against him involving the Sadrists and former Prime Minister Jafari. He agreed to change ministers at the beginning of the next session of the CoR. He called for a regular meeting of the "five" - the PM, Presidency Council and the Minister of State for National Security - calling it collective leadership. Talabani told him he needs to be PM for all of Iraq.

¶8. (S) Talabani said the PM agreed to help finance the Iraqi Islamic Party (IIP). He said there were good people in the IIP, but claimed that Hashemi made good relations difficult. The PM told Talabani that he had met with Ayad Samaraie, Usama Tikriti and others. He also claimed to have good relations with Minister of State Rafi al-Isawi.

Draft De-Ba'athification Law

¶9. (S) The Ambassador and Talabani discussed the draft De-Ba'athification law. The Ambassador promised he would send Talabani the Embassy's suggested version. Talabani agreed to review it and distribute his own suggested law by February 17th.

Removing CoR Speaker Mashhadani

BAGHDAD 00000565 002 OF 002

¶10. (S) Talabani said he and the Prime Minister had decided to remove Council of Representatives (CoR) Speaker Mahmoud Mashhadani because of his ineffectiveness and his inappropriate behavior. Talabani told the Ambassador he agreed with the PM's suggested replacement: Hachim al-Hassani (Iraqiyya). Talabani and Deputy Prime Minister Barham Salih agreed that Sunni Vice-President Tariq al-Hashemi could be convinced to accept replacing Mashhadani.

¶11. (S) The Ambassador gave Talabani a readout of the previous night's meeting with CoR speaker Mashhadani and the Minister of Defense (MoD) (reftel) in which Mashhadani threatened the MoD. Talabani condemned Mashhadani's behavior, but the Ambassador replied that as an elected Sunni leader Mashhadani does have a right to ask the MoD why he has not stopped the violence against the Sunnis. Talabani replied that more Shia have been killed than Sunnis over the past several months. Rashid agreed saying that Baghdad residents have told him the Sunni areas have been much better than Shia areas.

Clearing the Shatt al-Arab

¶12. (C) Rashid told the Ambassador that he had met with the Iranian Ambassador and agreed to form a joint commission to cooperate on issues such as the clearing of the Shatt al-Arab waterway. Rashid warned that the Iranians wanted to emphasize their own interests in the new commission, but to balance this he said they would make the commission very general. He said they agreed to a project clearing the Shatt al-Arab waterway, but to date the Iranians had only offered to help with a \$1 billion line of credit for the project. Meanwhile Rashid expressed impatience to begin surveying, studying, and preparing the project. He said the CoR would be "silly" if it did not approve funding for this project and claimed that the Council of Ministers had already given its

approval.

¶13. (C) He said he told Deputy Salih they should form a committee with the Transportation and Foreign Ministers to sit down and work out a plan. The Ambassador urged Rashid to seek Kuwait's and the other regional Arab countries' participation in the project.

Palestinian Delegation

¶14. (C) Rashid said a Palestinian delegation had visited Iraq and been impressed by the freedom, free speech, and standard of living enjoyed by Iraqis. They were also surprised by the lack of U.S. interference. Talabani said two members of the delegation were secular independents who told Talabani, "God help you among the Islamists" in Iraq. Asked about rumors of poor treatment of Palestinians in some Baghdad neighborhoods, Rashid said the Council of Ministers (CoM) had agreed on the need for better treatment. He told the Palestinians they needed to get together a committee to present their case to the CoM.

Oil Law, PKK

¶15. (C) The Ambassador told Talabani the PM would like to present the draft hydrocarbons law to the CoM by February 15. Talabani promised to talk to Ashti when he comes to Baghdad for negotiations and walk him back from his tough rhetoric and desire to rehash already agreed to parts of the draft hydrocarbon law. Salih said the so-called "appendices" to the draft law will be a point of contention.

¶16. (C) Talabani also briefly discussed the PKK with the Ambassador, telling him that the KRG will convince the PKK to maintain its ceasefire.

KHALILZAD